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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels

Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World, Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem, Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Union of Women, International Association for Counseling, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association of Thailand, Salvation Army, Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Women's International Zionist Organization and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

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Statement

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present to the 50th session of CSW the statement below for information and consideration.

The empowerment and autonomy of women are essential for achieving a society in which women and men are equal. Such empowerment must permeate political, economic and cultural structures at all levels. Although women have proven their capabilities as decision-makers in public life, they continue to be under-represented on most levels of governments and in legislative bodies. Some countries have even seen an alarming and significant decrease in the number of women in legislative bodies.

Women's and men's equal participation in political life is instrumental in enhancing the position of women in society as a whole. It is a precondition not only to ensuring that women's interests and contribution are taken into account by governments and society but also to strengthening and making democracy work effectively for the common good.

Socialisation, particularly the stereotyping of women and men reinforce the notion that political decision-making is the domain of men.

Therefore we

• encourage and actively promote alliances among women's organisations in order to coordinate activities and to give support to women in decision-making positions;

Moreover we urge governments

• to encourage networking and co-ordination between women and men at all levels of society and decision-making in both developed and developing countries;

• to promote, when non - existent, the public financing of innovative campaigns, to increase the participation of women in public life;

• to introduce strategies for achieving equality between women and men, which include positive actions such as quota and targets based on gender-segregated data within a specific time frame and establish indicators and benchmarks to allow regular evaluation;

• to implement the dual approach of gender-mainstreaming and positive action in all policies, programmes and budgets, in order to clearly identify their effects on women and men;

• to review the criteria for recruiting and appointing candidates to decision-making bodies to ensure that such criteria do not discriminate against women but promote their full and effective participation.